

del. ed

1151 f

S O M E
S C R I P T U R A L Observations
O N

- I. The Spirituality of *Gospel-Worship*.
- II. The Nature of true *Christian Prayer*.
- III. Our SAVIOUR'S Direction concerning *Fasting*.

I N
A Letter to a Friend,
Subscrib'd PHILALETHER.

To which is added,

A P O S T S C R I P T,
By way of Answer to some Objections.

By J O S E P H B E S S E. *X*

*All Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to
you, do ye even so to them. Mat. vii. 12.*

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by LUKE HINDE, at the Bible
in George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1756.

SOME

SCRIPTURAL OBSERVATIONS

ON

I. The Spirituality of Copied Manuscripts.

II. The Nature of the Copied Manuscripts.

III. The Author's Decision concerning the

IN

A Letter to a Friend.



A POSTSCRIPT

By way of Answer to some Observations

By JOSEPH HESS

PREFACE

To the PEOPLE called

QUAKERS.

AN early and eminent *Writer* of our *Persuasion* expresseth much in few Words, when he says, *The Grace of God within me, and the Scriptures without me, are the Foundation and Declaration of my Faith and Religion.**

On this Foundation, viz. the Grace of God within, that bringeth Salvation, our faithful Forefathers built their Religion: And to this Declaration, viz. The Scriptures without, they had their constant Appeal and Recourse, for Confirmation of the Testimonies, which they were concerned to publish to the World.

Some of these their Testimonies, however well grounded, have of late met with Opposition: And some Diversity of Sentiments concerning them

A 2

hath

* W. Penn's Works, Pag. 126, VOL. I.

hath appeared, even among our selves; the Cause of which, I think, has arisen through a Neglect of imitating the Bereans of old, who searched the Scriptures daily, whether those Things were so? Acts xvii. 11.

Wherefore I have thought it my Duty to make such a Search; and as the following Observations seem to me no other than the plain and necessary Consequences of that Search, I recommend them to the serious Consideration of such of you as are religiously inclined; in hopes you may thereby be in some measure assisted clearly to discern that beautiful Consistency, and harmonious Union, which ever subsists between the Declaration of the holy Scriptures, and the Testimonies born by our pious Predecessors.

The Work of building, as they did, on the Foundation, which standeth sure, is Heart-Work: An inward Purgation of the Soul, producing real Holiness in Life and Conversation. This Work consisteth not in Talking, but in Obeying: Not only in hearing the Will of God, but in doing it, as our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR assures us, saying, Whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock: And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House: And it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock, Mat. vii. 24, 25. On the other Hand, the Word of Truth is positive and
express,

express, viz. Every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand; and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the Fall of it. Ver. 26, 27.

Hence it appears, that Obedience is a Corner-stone in the Building of Christ's Church, and that Disobedience is the Cause of Ruin and Destruction.

Consider therefore, dear Friends, the great End, for which CHRIST hath enlightned you, is, that ye should walk in his Light; for, If we say that we have Fellowship with him, and walk in Darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth, 1 John i. 6. But if we walk in the Light, we shall have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them, Ephes. v. 11.

Our Happiness consists in Obedience according to Knowledge. If, saith CHRIST, ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them, John xiii. 17. To the attaining which State of Happiness, the Portion of the Willing and Obedient, that both you and I may in the End arrive, is my sincere Desire.

I shall close this Preface with subjoining the following Advices of holy Writ, viz.

That thou mayst walk in the Way of good Men, and keep the Path of the Righteous. *Prov. ii. 20.*

My Son, if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not. *Prov. i. 10.* Walk thou not in the Way with them, refrain thy Foot from their Path. *Ver. 15.*

Trust in the LORD with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Understanding. *Prov. iii. 5.* In all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy Paths. *Ver. 6.*

Be not wise in thine own Eyes: Fear the LORD and depart from Evil. *Prov. iii. 7.*

Farewel.

J. BESSE.

A
LETTER
 TO A
FRIEND.

LONDON, *the 25th of the Third Month,*
commonly called March, 1756.

Esteemed Friend !

TH Y friendly Request, more cogent to me than a Command, obliges me to impart to thee my Sentiments on some *Points*, which, though of the most serious Importance, the Wantonness and Levity of the Times have render'd *Subjects* of popular Talk and publick Scribble. This I shall endeavour to do with what *Plainness* and *Brevity* I can.

Next to the immediate Guidance of the Spirit of CHRIST, *the Light of the World*, John viii. 12. I regard the *holy Scriptures* as a Rule of Faith and Practice to us who have them, and I esteem the *plain Precepts* of CHRIST therein recorded, as the *best* of external Directions for regulating human Conduct.

One of those *plain Precepts* is, *Love your Enemies*, Mat. v. 44.

To this *Christian Precept*, the *Doctrine* and *Practice of War*, viz. *Kill your Enemies*, appears to me to import a manifest and downright *Contradiction*. Nor can I discern the Consistency of a *Christian Man's* *praying* for the *Destruction* of those whom CHRIST hath commanded him to *love*.

This *Love* is the grand *Characteristick* of *Christianity*; By this, saith CHRIST himself, shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another, John xiii. 35.

The whole Tenour of the *Doctrine* of CHRIST is *Love*. 'Tis an essential Attribute of the Deity. God is Love, 1 John iv. 8.

Accordingly, under the Gospel Dispensation, we are directed to put up our Prayers and Supplications to him, as the God of Love and Peace.

Thus our Testimony against Wars and Fighting hath its Foundation in *Christian Love*, the Nature of which, we have Cause to think, too many of the Professors of *Christianity* have not thoroughly considered.

Men talk in publick Companies of *worshipping* God, and of *Fasting* and *Prayer*, while the Levity and Unconcernedness wherewith they discourse on Subjects of the highest Consequence and Importance, give the clearest Evidence to considerate Auditors, how little they have at Heart of what they exercise their Wits, and employ their Tongues, so fluently about.

Others

Others there are who publish their Writings on the same Subjects, some of which I have perus'd, and the only Inference I have been able to draw from them with any Certainty, is, that their Authors have no proper or scriptural Ideas of *the Spirituality of Gospel-Worship*, nor any adequate or just Notions of the real Nature of *Fasting and Prayer* in these *Gospel-times*. Wherefore I shall communicate to thee such Thoughts, as through reading the holy Scriptures, and meditating thereon, have occurred to me on those Heads.

I. *Of the Spirituality of Gospel-Worship.*

THE essential Difference between the *Nature* of true *Gospel-Worship*, and the *external Rites and ceremonial Performances* used in the Times of the *Mosaick Dispensation*, is excellently described by the Evangelist *John*, in the Account he gives of the Conference which our blessed SAVIOUR had with the Woman of *Samarita* at *Jacob's Well*, being as follows, viz. *The Woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a Prophet. Our Fathers worshipped in this Mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the Place where Men ought to worship. JESUS saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the Hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship, for Salvation is of the Jews. But the Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshippers shall*

shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in Truth, John iv. 19 to 24.

In this Passage of *holy Writ*, we have the Nature and Spirituality of Gospel-Worship expressly declared by the Lip of Truth, and the total Abolition of the outward and local Temple at *Jerusalem*, which, with its Rites, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, had been for a Season of divine Appointment, proclaimed by the Authority of CHRIST himself, the only Sanctifier of his People, the *one Mediator between God and Men*, who gave himself a Ransom for all, 1. Tim. ii. 6. To this End and Purpose, *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*, Tit. ii. 14.

Since the Abolition of the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and the Cessation of its Temporary Rites, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, we find not any material House or Building dignified in Scripture with the Epithet of *Holy*, or called the *Temple of God*.

'Tis an established Gospel Truth, that *The Most High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*, Acts vii. 48. The Temple of GOD in this Gospel-day is the Heart of Man. Know ye not, saith the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, *that ye are the Temple of GOD, and that the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you. If any Man defile the Temple of GOD, him shall GOD destroy ; for the*
Temple

Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are,
 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. *God's Worship is in his*
Temple. Sin is the Defilement of his Temple :
To cleanse and purge out this Defilement, was
the very End and Purpose of CHRIST's Coming
in the Flesh. Behold, saith John, the Lamb
of God, which taketh away the Sin of the World,
 John i. 29. *For this Purpose the Son of God*
was manifested, that he might destroy the Works
of the Devil. He that committeth Sin is of the
Devil, 1 John iii. 8. In which State of Sin, out-
 ward Performances and verbal Prayers can avail
 nothing ; as the Man cured of his Blindness
 assures us, *Now, says he, we know that God*
heareth not Sinners, but if any Man be a Wor-
shipper of God, and doth his Will, him he hear-
eth, John ix. 31. Men act preposterously,
 when they pretend to worship God in a State
 of continued Disobedience and Pollution. The
Psalmist, under a Sense of the Necessity of this
Cleansing from Sin, expresses himself thus, I
will wash mine Hands in Innocency, so will I
compass thine Altar, O LORD, Psa. xvi. 6.
Gospel-Worship is the Sacrifice of a broken and
contrite Heart. 'Tis a most solemn, awful, and
reverent Access of a devout and humble Soul to
God, the Father of Spirits, through Jesus
CHRIST his Son. This Access to God in Spirit,
is the highest Happiness the Soul of Man is
capable of attaining in this Life. 'Tis an inex-
pressible Consolation to an humble Christian
Suppliant, to experience the Presence of the
LORD in his Temple, and his own Heart to
 be

be made an Habitation of GOD through the Spirit, Ephes. ii. 22. This inestimable Blessing of the Gospel is the Privilege of those who are sanctified in CHRIST JESUS, and have witnessed his Spirit cleansing them from their Sins, as CHRIST himself saith, *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see GOD*, Mat. v. 8. From this beatifick Vision, and inward Participation of the Comforts of the Presence of GOD, the Wicked and Impenitent stand excluded, as saith the Apostle Paul; *What Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? And what Communion hath Light with Darknes? And what Concord hath CHRIST with Belial? Or what Part hath he that believeth with an Infidel? And what Agreement hath the Temple of GOD with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living GOD; as GOD hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their GOD, and they shall be my People. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the LORD ALMIGHTY*, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

No wicked Man is a true Worshipper of GOD. Outside Sacrifices and superficial Performances of Religion, offered or done by unclean and wicked Men, are no Part of spiritual Worship; the Prophet *Isaiab* saith, *He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he*

He offered Swines Blood; he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol, Isa. lxvi. 3. The Rejection of their Oblations was the Consequence of their Disobedience, as the Prophet in the Name of the LORD immediately shews: They have chosen their own Ways, and their Soul delighted in their Abominations: I also will choose their Delusions, and will bring their Fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; but they did Evil before mine Eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. Ver. 3, 4. But to this Man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word, Ver. 2. This is the Man whom the LORD especially regardeth, as saith the Psalmist, The LORD taketh Pleasure in his People, he will beautify the Meek with Salvation, Psal. cxlix. 4. Gospel-Worship must be attended with Gospel-Reformation, and cannot be truly performed in a State of Pollution. The Heart must first be cleansed, for the Scripture assures us, that Without Holiness no Man shall see the LORD, Heb. xii. 14. Wherefore in order to our Acceptance with God, 'tis highly necessary to observe the Advice of the Apostle, saying, Let us cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1. In Proportion to our Progression in this most necessary Work of Reformation, we may gradually become qualified for the Performance of Gospel-Worship in Spirit and in Truth. Now we know that God heareth not Sinners,

Sinners, but if any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he beareth, John ix. 31.

Indiscreet and weak Men may vainly amuse themselves, and one another, with groundless and unscriptural Imaginations of *worshipping* God acceptably, while they continue in their Sins. But this is a Deception of a most pernicious Tendency. I wish, in this Respect some of the Teachers of the People in our Times be not causing them to err, and that they may not deservedly incur the Sentence pronounced of old by the Prophet Malachi, viz. *Ye have wearied the LORD with your Words; yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? when ye say, Every one that doeth Evil is good in the Sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them, or where is the GOD of Judgment?* Mal. ii. 17.

II. OF P R A Y E R.

Payer is the Sacrifice of a Man's Heart to God. *The Sacrifices of God, saith the royal Psalmist, are a broken Spirit: A broken and a contrite Heart, O GOD, thou wilt not despise, Psal. li. 17.* This Sacrifice of the Heart is a perpetual Duty, to be performed every where, and at all Times: *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint, Luke xviii. 1. Pray without ceasing, 1 Thess. v. 17. I will that Men pray every where, 1 Tim. ii. 8.* For offering up this perpetual Sacrifice, every true Believer in CHRIST, sanctified by his Spirit, hath Access to GOD through him the only Mediator; *For there is one*

one GOD, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man CHRIST JESUS, 1 Tim. ii. v. In which Respect the Apostle Peter calls the Saints in general, *An holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices, acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST, 1 Pet. ii. 6. and Ver. 9. Ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, that ye should shew forth the Praises of him who hath called you out of Darkness into his marvellous Light.*

To pray unto God, and to praise him in Spirit and in Truth, is the Duty and Privilege of every individual Christian Man under the Gospel Dispensation: An indispensable Duty, not to be transferred to, nor performed by, any other Man, as a Proxie, or Substitute, in his stead. The Voice of divine Wisdom is to every particular Man, *My Son, give me thine Heart, Prov. xxiii. 26.* All true Prayer proceeds from a devout, sincere, humble and contrite Heart, influenced by the Spirit of CHRIST, the Spirit of Grace and Supplication; Because, saith the Apostle, *ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 6.*

Without this Spirit of Prayer influencing Mens Hearts, no external Forms, Prescriptions, or Compositions of Words, put together by the Art of Man, can, in any proper Sense, be called Prayer. The meer customary Repetition of such Forms, Prescriptions, or Compositions, may be, as it usually is, called *saying Prayers*, or as our SAVIOUR himself terms it, *making*

making long Prayers. A Practice used by the Scribes and Pharisees to cover their Hypocrisy, which he most severely reprehends, saying, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye devour Widows Houses, and for a Pretence make long Prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater Damnation,* Mat. xxiii. 14. A similar Practice to which had been reprov'd in their Forefathers by the Prophet *Isaiab*, when he says, *Wo unto them that seek deep to hide their Counsell from the LORD, and their Works are in the Dark, and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us?* Isa. xxix. 15. Wherefore the LORD said, *Forasmuch as this People draw near me with their Mouth, and with their Lips do honour me, but have removed their Heart far from me, and their Fear toward me is taught by the Precept of Men: Therefore behold; I will proceed to do a marvellous Work among this People, even a marvellous Work, and a Wonder, for the Wisdom of their wise Men shall perish, and the Understanding of their prudent Men shall be hid,* Ver. 13. 14. These Lip-Servants are elegantly described by the Psalmist in his Time, *Help LORD, saith he, for the godly Man ceaseth; for the Faithful fail from among the Children of Men. They speak vainly every one with his Neighbour; with flattering Lips and with a double Heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering Lips, and the Tongue that speaketh proud Things. Who have said, with our Tongues we will prevail, our Lips are our own: Who is Lord over us?* Psal. xii. 1, 2, 3, 4. This substituting Lip-Service instead

instead of the *Prayer of the Heart*, is called by *Isaiah*, *Turning of Things upside down*, which, he says, *shall be esteemed as the Potter's Clay*. Isa. xxix. 16. The *known Property* of which, is to be moulded into whatsoever Fashion the Workman pleaseth. Even so verbal Forms of *saying Prayers*, or of *making long Prayers*, are ever changeable with the Times, and subservient to the variable Humours and Purposes of whatsoever Powers are in present Possession at the Helm of Government. But the *Prayer of the Heart*, under the Influence of the Spirit of CHRIST, is sincere, solid and substantial, not subject to Mutations at the Will of Man, nor under any human Command or Direction; but is only subject to the Spirit of CHRIST, of which the Evangelist says, *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth*: So is every one that is born of the Spirit, John iii. 8. Such new-born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Upon these the Spirit of CHRIST breaths, and moves them to Prayer, presenting their ardent Desires and Supplications of Soul to the Father, even before they are of Strength sufficient to express them in Words, as saith the Apostle Paul; *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the Hearts, knoweth what is*

the Mind of the Spirit, because he maketh Intercession for the Saints, according to the Will of God. Rom. viii. 26, 27. This inward Supplication and ardent Desire of the Soul toward God, the Father of Mercies, through the Mediation and Intercession of CHRIST, is real Prayer in Spirit and in Truth. Words, at best, are but the outside Dress or Clothing of this real Prayer : But when Men, like the Scribes of old, make long Prayers while their Deeds are evil, their Hypocrisy is the more egregiously made manifest ; for CHRIST hath assured us, that every Tree is known by his own Fruit : for of Thorns Men do not gather Figs, nor of a Bramble Bush gather they Grapes, Luke vi. 44.

But in this weighty and important Duty of *Prayer*, let us seriously consider the express Precepts and Directions given by our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR himself to his Disciples : He first guards and cautions them against the Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees ; *When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the Hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be seen of Men. Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward, Mat. vi. 5. They got the Thing they desired, viz. the Applause of Men. But CHRIST enjoins to his Followers a very different manner of Deportment ; But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray,*

pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what Things ye have need of before ye ask him, Ver. 6, 7, 8. And that they might the better observe his Cautions to avoid making long Prayers like the *Pharisees*, or using vain Repetitions as the *Heathen*, he gives them an Instance of Brevity in what is commonly called the *Lord's Prayer*, which, though used by some as a *Form of Prayer*, was certainly not intended as such, as is evident by the Accounts of it given by the Evangelists *Matthew* and *Luke*, who give it not in the same, but a different Form of Expression. This brief and most comprehensive Instance of what it behoveth Men to pray for, hath in it this Clause, viz. *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors*, Mat. vi. 12. Or as *Luke* expresses it, *Forgive us our Sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*, Luke xi. 4. From which Clause, so conditionally expressed, the following Inferences are most express and positive, viz. *For if ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases*, Mat. vi. 14, 15. Or as the Evangelist *Mark* has it, *When ye stand praying forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in Heaven may forgive you your Trespases. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven*

B 2

forgive

forgive your Trespases, Mark xi. 25, 26. These Inferences, which positively and expressly barr the Door of Mercy against every cruel, impenitent, and unmerciful Man, are perfectly agreeable to the Doctrine of Christianity, as the following Texts do shew, viz. Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy, Mat. v. 7. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST'S Sake hath forgiven you, Ephes. iv. 32. He shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy, James ii. 13. Unmerciful Men are not led by the Spirit of CHRIST; and the Apostle assures us, that if any Man have not the Spirit of CHRIST he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. Clear and convincing is the Reasoning of the Son of Syrach upon this Subject, viz. He that revengeth shall find Vengeance from the LORD, and he will surely keep his Sins in Remembrance. Forgive thy Neighbour the Hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon from the LORD? He sheweth no Mercy to a Man which is like himself, and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins? If he that is but Flesh nourish Hatred, who will intreat for Pardon of his Sins? Remember thy End, and let Enmity cease. Remember Corruption and Death, and abide in the Commandment. Remember the Commandments, and bear no Malice to thy Neighbour. Remember the Covenant of the Highest, and wink at Ignorance. Eccles. xxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Unmerciful

Unmerciful Men, while remaining such, have no rational Ground to expect *Forgiveness* of God, nor have they in that State any *Covenant-Right* to ask it. They are in a very desperate and dangerous Condition. Their only Remedy in this grievous Distemper is what the Apostles experienced, as *Paul* testifieth, saying, *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another.* But after that the Kindness and Love of GOD our Saviour toward Man appeared. Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us, by the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly thro' JESUS CHRIST our Saviour: That being justified by his Grace, we should be made Heirs, according to the Hope of eternal Life, Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. This Laver of Regeneration can wash away all *Malice* and *Envy*, and this renewing of the holy Ghost is able to transmute the cruel and unrelenting Natures of the most unmerciful of Men into the meek, patient, humble and merciful Disposition of the *Lamb of God*, who taketh away the Sin of the World, John i. 29. Having made this, we hope, not altogether unnecessary Digression, concerning the Exclusion of unmerciful Men from Mercy; we now return to the before mentioned Direction of our SAVIOUR to his Disciples, to be *private* and *brief*, not *pharisaical* nor *long*, in their Prayers. And his own Example in this Behalf, was cor-

respondent to his *Precept*, as appears by the Texts following, viz. *And in the Morning, rising up a great while before Day, he went out and departed into a solitary Place, and there prayed, Mark i. 35. He went forward, and fell on the Ground, and prayed, Mark xiv. 35. Again, He went away and prayed, Ver. 39. He withdrew himself into the Wilderness and prayed, Luke v. 16.*

Let what I have said on this Head suffice at present to shew, that a *true Christian Man's Prayer* is not limited to *Words*, nor to any *Forms* or *Compositions* of human Invention ; that the *Seat of Prayer* is in the Heart ; and that *Privacy* yields better Opportunities, and more convenient, for the Performance of it, than *Popularity* ; that real Prayer is *one Thing*, and a meer formal Repetition of Words is quite *another Thing* : All which I shall submit to the serious Consideration of the intelligent Reader, and proceed to express my Sentiments

III. Concerning F A S T I N G.

AS in the Case of *Prayer* before spoken of, so in this of *Fasting*, the *Directions* of our blessed SAVIOUR to his Followers, are very express, plain and significant, viz. *Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the Hypocrites, of a sad Countenance ; for they disfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their Reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father*

Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly, Mat. vi. 16, 17, 18. Here our SAVIOUR first cautions his Disciples against the *customary formal fasting* of *Hypocrites*, who *disfigure their Faces*; or as our vulgar *English Phrase* expresses it, *make Friday-Faces*, that they may appear to Men to fast; and in so appearing he assures us, they have their Reward. Thereby intimating, that they have no other Reward, than a meer empty Name of being called religious. But against this *pharisaical Manner of fasting* in publick, he expressly guards his Followers, by enjoining them *Secrecy* and *Retirement* in fasting, as a Method acceptable to God, and rewardable by him, as being more real Indications of hearty and sincere Repentance, than any external Appearances or outside Forms whatsoever.

This Precept of our SAVIOUR in respect of *fasting*, is not a Command, but a Prohibition: It doth not direct the Observation of *fasting* as a religious Duty; but it expressly prohibits *fasting* after the Manner of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. He doth not so much as bid them fast; but in case of fasting, which is left to their *Christian Freedom*, he exhorts them to do it in a Manner most agreeable to the Spirit and Nature of true Religion, which *standeth not in Eye-service, as Men-pleasers*, but in *Singleness of Heart* towards God, Ephes. vi. 5.

That an Usage or Custom of fasting, as an external Ceremony, denoting true and sincere Repentance, was ancient among the *Jews*,

seems evident by sundry Passages in the Writings of the old Testament : Wherein it is recorded of *Jehoshaphat* King of *Judah*, that he feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a Fast throughout all *Judah*. And *Judah* gathered themselves together to ask Help of the LORD, 2 *Chron.* xx. 3, 4. And the Trust and Dependence of this religious King being on God alone, as in his Prayer is thus expressed ; *We have no Might against this great Company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our Eyes are upon thee*, Ver. 12. In this State of Faith and Dependence on God alone, he receives this Answer, *Be not afraid, nor be dismayed, by reason of this great Multitude ; for the Battle is not yours, but GOD's. Ye shall not need to fight in this Battle, stand ye still and see the Salvation of the LORD*, Ver. 15, 17. This good King accordingly standing still in Faith, gained a compleat Victory over his Enemies, without fighting : *For the Children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the Inhabitants of Mount-Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them ; and when they had made an End of the Inhabitants of Mount-Seir, every one helped to destroy another*, Ver. 23. This is a lively Instance of the great Success of Faith, purely depending on the Help of God, without fighting. A like lively Instance of true Faith we have in *Ezra*, who says, *I proclaimed a Fast there at the River Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God to seek of him a right Way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our Substance. For I*
was

was ashamed to require of the King a Band of Soldiers and Horsemen to help us against the Enemy in the Way, because we had spoken unto the King, saying, *The Hand of God is upon all them for good, that seek him; but his Power and his Wrath is against all them that forsake him*, Ezra viii. 21, 22. This Passage of holy Writ seems clearly to shew, that this good Man apprehended any Reliance on human Aid to be inconsistent with a compleat Faith in God, for which Cause he plainly declares himself ashamed to require the former of the King, before whom he had publicly made an open Profession of the latter. The Reasoning of *Ezra* in this Case is exceeding strong, and correspondent to the Experience of the Faithful in former Ages, whose Dependence on human Auxiliaries was ever lessened in Proportion as their Trust and Faith in God was enlarged: *David*, about to encounter the *Philistine*, put off his Armour, and accosts the haughty Giant thus, *All this Assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with Sword and Spear, for the Battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our Hands*, 1 Sam. xvii. 47. His sole Dependence, and total Expectation was on the Power of God, for he saith expressly, *There is no King saved by the Multitude of an Host: A mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength: An Horse is a vain Thing for Safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great Strength. Behold the Eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy, to deliver their Soul from Death, and*
to

to keep them alive in *Famine*. Our Soul waiteth for the LORD, he is our Help, and our Shield: For our Heart shall rejoyce in him, because we have trusted in his holy Name. Let thy Mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee, Psal. xxxiii. 16, to 22. This Hope, Faith, or Trust in God, is a Condition of attaining his Mercy, as by the following Texts of holy Scripture doth plainly appear, viz. *Blessed is the Man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose Hope the LORD is*, Jer. xvii. 7. For we are saved by Hope, Rom. viii. 24. It is good that a Man should both hope and quietly wait for the Salvation of the LORD, Lam. iii. 26. If ye have Faith and doubt not, ye shall say unto this Mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the Sea, it shall be done, Mat. xxi. 21. This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith, 1 John v. 4. By Faith ye stand, 2 Cor. i. 24. He that trusteth in the LORD, Mercy shall compass him about, Psal. xxxii. 10. O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the Man that trusteth in him, Psal. xxxiv. 8. He that putteth his Trust in the LORD shall be made fat, Prov. xxviii. 25. He is a Buckler to all those that trust in him, Psal. xviii. 30. They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever. Psal. cxxv. 1. Whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he, Prov. xvi. 20. The Righteous shall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD: His Heart is established, he shall not be afraid, Psal. cxii. 7, 8.

External

External Fasting, like other outside Performances enjoined by the *Jewish* Law, during the Continuance of the *Mosaick* Dispensation, appears to be *ceremonial*: For, Purity of Heart, and Holiness of Life thence proceeding, was a Sacrifice acceptable to God through all Ages and Generations. Let us especially observe with what a pathetick Ardour of holy Zeal the Prophet *Isaiab* reproves the Hypocrisy of the degenerate *Jews* in his Time, who instead of turning from the Evil of their Doings, were for observing Fasts. His severe Reprehensions of their Hypocrisy is at large expressed in the 58th Chapter of his Prophecy, to the serious Perusal of which we recommend our Reader, where the Nature of acceptable Fasting, and the Necessity of Purity of Heart, and Holiness of Life, are copiously and excellently described.

As then *external Fasting*, even in the Times of the *Mosaick* Dispensation, was ceremonial; so in these Gospel-Times we have no Injunction or Precept in the New-Testament, enjoining the Continuance of it, but rather the contrary: For the Apostle *Paul* speaking to the *Galatians* concerning such kind of Observations, saith, *Ye observe Days and Months, and Times and Years, I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you Labour in vain*, Gal. iv. 10, 11. In this Respect therefore he exhorteth them on this wise, *Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage*, Gal. v. 1. This Liberty, wherewith CHRIST hath made us free,

is

is a perfect Freedom from the Bondage of *Jewish Ceremonies*, which being abolished and put an End to by him, who *by one Offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, Heb. x. 14. We do not any where in the New-Testament find any other Ceremonies appointed or instituted in their Room. But every true *Christian Man*, in Points of Religion and worshipping of God, living in Obedience to his holy Spirit, and the Doctrine of CHRIST and his Apostles recorded in Scripture, is under a State of entire and perfect Freedom from all human Injunctions whatsoever. Thus are CHRIST'S *Freemen* made Witnesses of the fulfilling of his own Saying. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*, John viii. 36.

Thus have I endeavoured to collect from the holy Scriptures, the true Meaning, and real Gospel Sense of *Worship, Prayer, and Fasting*, by which, as I apprehend, it will appear,

1st. That the *only true* and acceptable Worship of God under the Gospel, is the worshipping the *Father of Spirits* in Spirit and in Truth.

2^{dly}. That *Prayer* is the *Sacrifice or Offering* of a *broken and contrite Heart*, the continual Duty of every individual Man, not confined or limited to *Times, Places, or Forms* of Words, of Man's Appointment.

3^{dly}. That the *Fast*, acceptable to God, is an *Abstinence from Sin*, and a sincere Conformity of Life to his Commandments.

Let

Let the considerate Reader consult his Bible, and see for himself, whether these Things be so, or not. 'Tis a Matter of the highest Importance, and of the most immediate Concern to every individual: The Voice of Wisdom being to each particular Person, *My Son, give me thine Heart*, Prov. xxiii. 16. Correspondent to which are the apostolick Monitions, *Pray without ceasing*, 1 Thes. v. 17. *I will that Men pray every where*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. In offering Prayers and Praises to God, every Man is his own Priest: The Apostle Peter, writing to the Believers in general, saith, *Ye are a chosen Generation, a royal Priesthood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People, that ye should shew forth the Praises of him who hath called you out of Darkness into his marvellous Light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. And indeed, when we consider Prayer as it really is, the Offering of a Man's Heart, it must appear irrational to suppose, that one Man can make an Offering of another Man's Heart. 'Tis therefore the incumbent and indispensable Duty of every Man, to make an Offering of his own Heart unto God, and patiently to wait for, and humbly submit to the purifying Operations of his holy Spirit, which he hath promised to those that seek it, and to pray with the Psalmist, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy Presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit*, Psal. li. 10, 11, 12. His next Words in consequence to

to this Petition, are, *Then will I teach Transgressors thy Way, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee,* Ver. 13. These last Words carry with them a severe Reproof to un sanctified Pretenders to preach, and plainly import, that such Men are but busying themselves in vain, while they are wholly unqualified for the Work they undertake.

If the foregoing Observations may be of Service to any religious Enquirer, I shall think my Pains in collecting and penning them to be amply recompensed, and in Sincerity of Affection subscribe myself,

Thy real Friend,

PHILALETHES.

A
P O S T S C R I P T.

ALthough the Writer of the foregoing Letter thinks the Sentiments he has therein expressed, to be entirely consonant to the Doctrine of the New-Testament, yet having heard some Objections made thereto, he thinks proper briefly to consider them.

Objection 1st. If we stand still, and wage not War in our own Defence, our Enemies will prevail against us, and we shall be an easy Prey to any Invader.

Answer. This Objection is similar to that of the *Jews*, against our blessed SAVIOUR, the *Prince of Peace*, while conversant with, and publishing his *Doctrine of Peace* among them here on Earth. *If, say they, we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our Place and Nation,* John xi. 48. The *Scribes and Pharisees*, a faithless Generation, whose Fear of the *Romans* was far superior to their Trust in GOD, alarmed at the Miracles of CHRIST, and the conceived Danger of his peaceable Doctrine, and irritated at his severe Reproofs of their notorious Hypocrisy, took Counsel together for to put him to Death, John xi. 53. Their Malice hurried them on to the Crucifixion of the Lord
of

of Life, and by so doing, provoked the Wrath of the ALMIGHTY, in his righteous Judgment, to accelerate and bring upon them and their Nation more swiftly, that very Destruction by the Romans which they stood in Fear of.

But what does this *Objection* avail to a Man of true Christian Faith, who firmly believes the Words of our SAVIOUR, *All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18? Is not the Protection of him who is omnipotent, a sufficient Security against the Fear of Man, *whose Breath is in his Nostrils?* Isai. ii. 22. And before whom, as King Nebuchadnezzar, after his Humiliation, acknowledges, *All the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing, and he doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can stay his Hand, or say unto him, What dost thou?* Dan. iv. 34. 35. In him only is Security, as saith the Psalmist, *Thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in Safety*, Psal. iv. 8. All Dependence on Creatures is insufficient, for, *Vain is the Help of Man*, Psal. cviii. 12. *There is no King saved by the Multitude of an Host: A mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength: An Horse is a vain Thing for Safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great Strength. Behold, the Eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy*, Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17, 18.

Objection 2d. Doth not your recommending of private Prayer, detract from the Duty of

of *publick Worship*, and the Exercise of verbal Prayer therein?

Answer, Not at all. Because, all *true Prayer* is that of the *Heart*: And an *Heart* rightly disposed to pray, cannot fail of being frequent in the use of *private Prayer*, in which Respect, the Apostle exhorts to pray *every where*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. and to *pray without ceasing*, 1 Thes. v. 17. This is *Gospel-Prayer, in Spirit, and in Truth*. This Disposition of Mind we earnestly recommend as necessary to render *publick Prayer* acceptable, whereunto is required *An Union of Hearts* so disposed. An Assembly of Persons all so disposed were very desirable; for if, as the Apostle *James* says, *The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much*, James v. 16. How much more available must the united Supplications of a Congregation wholly composed of such Men be?

Wherefore we press the Necessity of Mens Hearts being disposed to pray unto God in secret, that a Conjunction of Hearts so disposed, may render the publick Prayers put up to God in our religious Assemblies, the more acceptable: Because we think that Hearts utterly indisposed for private Prayer, are in no wise qualified for rightly performing it in publick.

'Tis to those only who *have Faith, and doubt not*, our LORD promised, *Whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive*, Mat. xxi. 22. But the Unbelieving and Impenitent are excluded the House of Prayer; for in that

State their Prayers have no Acceptance with God, as the Scriptures of Truth assure us, *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination*, Prov. xxi. 27. *The Way of the Wicked is an Abomination unto the LORD*, Prov. xv. 9. The first Step to Acceptance with God, is a *Reformation of Manners*: This is the very *Door of Entrance to the House of Prayer*, which is always shut to the wilfully *Wicked and Disobedient*: For which Cause the Servants of God press with great Earnestness the Necessity of this first Step in Religion; *Amend your Ways and your Doings*, Jer. vii. 3. *Obey my Voice, and I will be your God*, Ver. 23. And saith *Isaiah the Prophet*, *Wash ye, make you clean; put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes. Cease to do Evil, learn to do well: Seek Judgment, relieve the Oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow*, Isa. i. 16, 17. These are the *Terms and Conditions of Access to God in Prayer*. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD, Ver. 18. Wherefore, although wicked and profane Men may frequent publick Assemblies, and like the *Scribes of old, make long Prayers*; yet let us seriously consider the Caution and Sentence our SAVIOUR himself pronounces concerning them; *Beware of the Scribes, which desire to walk in long Robes, and love Greetings in the Markets, and the highest Seats in the Synagogues, and the chief Rooms at Feasts: Which devour Widows Houses, and for a Shew make long Prayers; the same shall receive greater Damnation*, Luke xx. 46, 47.

Objection

Objection 3d. In not observing the Days appointed by the King's Proclamation for *publick Fasts*, ye are Breakers of the Apostle's Precept, who enjoins us *to be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good Work*, Tit. iii. 1.

Answer. Our Fear toward GOD is not taught by the Precepts of Men, Isa. xxix. 13. Our Testimony against War is founded on the Precept of CHRIST, *Love your Enemies*, Mat. v. 44. To which Precept the Practice of War appears to us directly contradictory. Can it be our Duty to act contrary to our own Belief? Can we be justified in doing what we believe CHRIST hath expressly forbidden? Does not the Apostle tell us, that *Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. This he asserts even in Cases of Doubt. Would it not be yet *greater Sin* in us to act contrary to our real Belief in a Point to us altogether clear and undoubted? As these Questions can be of no difficult Solution to Men of *Conscience* and *Religion*, we are the less concerned at the publick Reproaches of those, whose *grievous Abuses* of the *Innocent* plainly shew they have neither. These plain Queries center in a single Point, *viz.* The Assertion of the Apostle, *We ought to obey GOD rather than Men*, Acts v. 29. Wherefore we trust, our Obedience to GOD, in this Case, will not be displeasing to the King, who is the common FATHER of his People, the principal Patron and Protector under Heaven of true Religion and Conscience: To whom

whom, next under God we owe all *Fidelity* and *Allegiance*, for whose *Health* and *Happiness* we sincerely pray with our whole *Hearts*, and notwithstanding our conscientious *Disuse* of formal *Fasting*, are strict Observers of the *Apostle's* Precept, who says, *I exhort therefore, that first of all, Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men. For Kings, and for all that are in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.*

appears to us directly contradictory. Can it be our Duty to act contrary to our own Belief? Can we be justified in doing what we believe Christ hath expressly forbidden? Does not the Apostle tell us, that *Whosoever is not of Faith is sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. This he asserts even in Cases of Doubt. Would it not be yet greater Sin in us to act contrary to our real Duty in a Point to us altogether clear and

24 MAY 59

undoubted? A Resolution can be of no difficult Solution to Men of Conscience and Reason, we are the less concerned at the public Reproaches of those whose private Views of the Kingdom plainly show they have neither These plain Quæries center in a single Point, viz. The Affection of the Apostle. We ought to say *Lord I will New I will* v. 29. Wherefore we trust, our Obedience to God, in this Case, will not be displeasing to the King, who is the common FATHER of his People, the principal LAWYER and PROTECTOR under Heaven of the Kingdom and Government: To whom

